

The Marine Fisheries Commission has scheduled two public hearings in late November to accept comments on six fisheries management issues:

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS
Scheduled for November 27 and 28, 2001

Under the provisions of G.L. Ch. 30A and pursuant to the authority found in G.L. Ch. 130 ss. 17A, 80, 100A, and 104, the Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) and the Marine Fisheries Commission (MFC) have scheduled hearings on the following proposals. Contact the Division of Marine Fisheries for draft regulations and further details.

1. Accept public comment on an emergency regulation, 322 CMR 6.36, that enacted basic regulatory controls over a dredge fishery for quahogs (*Mercenaria*) in State-controlled waters of Nantucket Sound outside the boundaries of town jurisdiction. The regulation establishes permit requirements, and catch limits and gear restrictions for the developing fishery.
2. DMF proposals to amend regulations pertaining to right whale protection (322 CMR 12.00) and fixed gear marking (322 CMR 4.13). DMF proposes the following:
 - Amend the buoy line break-away specifications requiring a "weak buoy link", "tag line", or galvanic time release for use in Cape Cod Bay Critical Habitat during winter and early spring.
 - Ban the use of floating groundlines year-round in Cape Cod Bay Critical Habitat beginning in 2003 and in all of Cape Cod Bay south of Brant Rock beginning in 2004.
 - Implement a "Dynamic Management" scheme for gillnets that would require fishermen to remove or continuously tend their nets after notification from DMF about right whale aggregations in Cape Cod Bay during May through December.
 - Create a new gear marking color scheme specific for gillnet high flyers.
 - Amend the lobster and gillnet breakaway specifications for year-round use that would complement similar federal requirements. Lobster buoy line break-away breaking strength is lowered from 1,100 lbs. to 600 lbs. and for gillnets, breakaway devices of 1,100 breaking strength would be required in the center of each headrope. Also gillnet anchoring rules are proposed.
 - Extend the January - May 15 gillnet closure to include a 5-square mile area west of Critical Habitat off the Plymouth shoreline.
 - Shorten the season when the fixed gear fishing rules are most restrictive in Cape Cod Bay Critical Habitat. The current season of January 1- May 15 would be amended to January 1- April 30.
3. DMF proposal to establish a new special permit [322 CMR 7:01(4)] required by any vessel engaged in recreational fishing on a for-hire basis.
4. DMF proposal to amend summer flounder possession limit in the offshore winter fishery (322 CMR 6.22) from to 500 to 1,000 lbs.
5. DMF proposal to amend regulations (322 CMR 6.07, 6.22, 6.28 and 6.31) governing how the agency transmits information about quota-managed fishery closures to permit holders. This proposal would eliminate direct mailings and instead require fishermen to monitor the progress of quotas and closures through a dial-in phone system and the DMF internet site.
6. Public petition from the Cape Cod Salties Sportfishing Club to modify winter flounder recreational fishing rules (322 CMR 6.23(2)) by eliminating the current March - April closed season and adopting other conservation measures such as a reduced bag limit, larger minimum size or no-fishing days.

Two public hearings are scheduled:

Tuesday November 27, 2001 at Plymouth North High School Auditorium at 7:00 PM

Wednesday November 28, 2001 at the Sawyer Free Public Library, 7:00 P.M.